Met Office

March 2002

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1961-1990.

UK overview

A very mild and sunny month across the whole of the UK. It was also a fairly dry month across Northern Ireland, England and Wales, with only central parts of Scotland and the Northern Isles experiencing above average rainfall.

With gusts of over 60 knots on the 9th over Norfolk, a marked 'Fen Blow' was experienced as the strong winds lifted the topsoil. Boltshope Park in Durham reported 10 cm of lying snow on the morning of the 10th.

England and Wales diary of highlights

Mostly mild and mainly dry. Changeable at first, then a notable gale on the 9th, with a little snow in the north. A wet third week, then dry sunny and very mild by day, but with some frost and fog overnight.

1st to 8th A changeable, mainly dry period as weak fronts crossed the region between low pressure to the north and high pressure to the south. There were sunny periods but it was rather cold at first with some overnight frost and fog patches and some occasional wintry showers in the north-east. From the 5th onwards it was mild or very mild, however the 6th was windy with some rain in the north.

9th to 13th Generally changeable with occasional rain and mostly mild. A small intense low moved eastwards across northern districts during the 9th bringing gales to many areas and some snow to high ground in northern England. With gusts over 60 knots in Norfolk a marked 'Fen Blow' was experienced as the strong winds lifted the topsoil. A gust of 67 knots was recorded at Mumbles Head in south Wales. The 10th was also windy with more gales in western and northern areas, while Boltshope Park (Durham) boasted 10 cm of snow that morning. As low pressure transferred to Biscay during the 12/13th a quieter interlude developed. Northern areas were sunny but with overnight frost, Shap (Cumbria) falling to -6.5 °C early on the 13th. Rain affected extreme southern areas from time to time.

14th to 20th Unsettled with periods of rain heavy at times. An anticyclone over Scandinavia fed chilly easterly winds at first, but falling pressure in the south-west approaches brought rain on the 14th and 15th, especially to southern areas. Thundery showers affected the Norfolk / Suffolk coast later on the 15th. Low pressure centred in mid North Atlantic brought mild southerly winds on the 16th and 17th but rain heavy at times spread in later, with thunder reported along the Channel coast. The 18th was wet as a low moved from the Severn estuary to the Wash, while rain with hill and coastal fog were the uninvited guests to southern parts on the 19th and 20th.

21st to 31st Mainly dry, sunny anticyclonic weather prevailed as pressure rose over the region and drifted east. It was mostly very mild by day but with some overnight fog and frost later. On the 28th early morning fog caused multiple accidents on the M40. The 29th and 30th saw temperatures reach 18 °C in the London area, making it the capital's warmest March Good Friday, although scattered showers affected places in the Midlands, East Anglia and south-east England later. As the high pressure lost ground Atlantic fronts brought patchy rain and drizzle to many areas on the 31st.

Scotland diary of highlights

Mostly mild and unsettled, but with two fine spells.

The weather in March was varied, with no particular spell of weather lasting for a long time. Mild weather predominated, with relatively little frost and snow.

The month began with a cold and clear northerly outbreak, but winds soon backed into the west, allowing mild and cloudy weather to advance across the country.

Strong westerly winds blew between the 4th and 6th, with gusts reaching 64 knots at Muckle Holm on Shetland on the 4th. Mild and humid air brought torrential rain to the West Highlands on the 5th, with several gauges recording over 80 mm.

Westerly winds continued for the next few days, but it became colder, with snow extending to low levels between the 9th and 10th. The precipitation took the form of showers on the 9th, with more general snow for a time early on the 10th. Gusts reached 69 knots at Barra on the 11th.

An anticyclone that developed over Scotland gave the first fine spell between the 12th and 14th. The clear skies and light winds allowed the temperature at Corgarff to drop to -7.3 °C on the 14th.

Southerly winds covered Scotland between the 15th and 19th as the high moved away to the east. After a period of cloud with some rain, milder and brighter weather arrived.

From the 19th to the 25th, a contrast in weather across Scotland was brought about by a slow moving front. The north-east was bright and rather cold, while the south-west was cloudy with outbreaks of rain.

An anticyclone, which became slow moving over Germany, gave the second fine spell over most of the country from the 26th to 29th. In the north-west it was rather cloudy, with south-westerly winds gusting to 61 knots at Stornoway on the 26th. For the bulk of Scotland there was much sunshine, with frost at night and pleasantly warm days. On the 28th the temperature at Fyvie Castle rose to 18.5 °C.

As the high retreated, the last couple of days saw the return of cloudy weather with a little rain.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

Mild, dry and sunny.

This was a dry March month with the period from 23rd to 30th being one of the driest throughout the Province. All areas experienced around 14 quite sunny days, which lifted sunshine totals above the monthly average throughout the Province. Both day and night-time temperatures were frequently above average, with daytime temperatures falling below 10 °C on only eight occasions on average. Overnight temperatures fell below freezing on five occasions while widespread ground frosts occurred on average around 14 times.

1st to 8th A rather cold but mostly dry and very sunny start to March on the 1st, otherwise quite mild. A succession of weather fronts brought mainly light and at times moderate rain and showers. However more prolonged rain and showers affected northern and western area on the 5th, 6th and 8th. The cloudier conditions meant fewer sunny spells, though the 7th was sunny everywhere. The winds were moderate to fresh in many places between the 5th and 8th.

9th to 15th Cooler conditions prevailed. Widespread ground frosts occurred throughout much of this period and were locally severe on the 13th and 14th. It was particularly sunny from the 11th through to the 14th inclusive with around a third of the total monthly sunshine duration being recorded on these days alone. Little or no sunshine was recorded on the 15th. Persistent moderate to heavy rain and showers occurred on the 9th, 10th and 15th, some of which were wintry in nature on the 9th and 10th. Over half an inch of rainfall was recorded in many areas on the 9th. Some isolated thunderstorms took place on the 11th. Little or no rainfall was recorded anywhere on the 12th and 13th.

16th to 20th A warm period with sunny spells accompanied by rain and scattered showers. The 18th was a warm, very sunny day everywhere, with little or no rainfall.

21st to 23rd Predominantly warm, with the warmest day of the month occurring on the 21st everywhere. The highest daily maximum temperature of 15.5 °C was recorded in the Armagh area on this day. On the whole it was mostly dry in many parts, though scattered light showers were recorded on the 21st and 22nd, with some locally quite heavy occurring in central areas of Co Down.

24th to 31st On the whole a predominantly warm, very sunny and fairly dry period, though widespread ground frosts did occur between the 26th and 30th, some of which were locally severe. Mist and fog occurred on the morning of the 29th and 30th. Rain moved across the Province on the night of the 30th.

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